

The immediate response of organised labour to the declaration of war was to suspend all strikes, and proclaim an industrial truce "for the duration " There was a lush of volunteers to the colours an equally impressive rush of volunteers from all classes and both sexes, for any and every kind of " war work " The first problem to be faced was that of unemployment This was severe at first, notably among women, and accompanied by widespread distress, although it was soon to pass off, and be replaced by the very different problem of an inexhaustible demand for labour for munitions, and for the substitution of the men who continued to pour into the army Early on, indeed, war, under modern conditions, proved not to correspond to anybody's expectations, either as to its scale or scope, nor were there any lines for meeting it, set down "in the books " When the War Workers⁵ Committee first met, few of its members had any very clear notion of how it was to function, or what it was to do Feelings ran high, tempers were brittle, there was dangerous and inflammable material about, which might easily have exploded, in a void Fortunately there was one member who had clear notions as to what the Committee was for, and how it was to work

The Secretary has recorded that, within the first week of the Committee's existence, Sidney Webb had drafted a thirty-two page pamphlet This not only demanded that the workers should be represented on the Distress Committees by then beginning to be set up, all over the country, but

gave to those representatives a clear and
concrete lead as to
the questions that would meet them, the sort of
action they
ought to press for, and the line generally, that
they should
take When the MS was handed over to the
Secretary, he
remarked that it bore no author's name The
author nodded
"It will have far more influence without my
name than with
it " Tins, as Mr Middleton observes, was true
Few men,
however, would have thought as much, fewer
still would